

hope that this government will finally take significant steps toward the restitution of Greek Catholic property as well as that of other religious denominations. Romania's failure to return religious properties to their rightful owners 15 years after Communist rule is inexcusable and, in my view, a destabilizing element in Romanian society.

Trafficking in human beings will continue to challenge the new government. Romania is a source and transit country primarily for women and girls trafficked for sexual exploitation. While the Romanian Government has made tremendous progress in its antitrafficking initiatives in the past several years, there are still some areas of concern including corruption within the law enforcement community, light penalties for those convicted of trafficking, and proposals to legalize or regulate prostitution.

Greater accountability is needed among members of the law enforcement community in view of allegations that officials have assisted traffickers in obtaining false passports, facilitated illegal border crossings and accepted bribes to tamper with witnesses' testimony. Traffickers are increasingly likely to be prosecuted for their crimes in Romania, however, the penalties imposed by judges are still too low—usually 1 year or less in prison. Penalties should be severe enough to reflect the heinous nature of the crime and to serve as a deterrent to other prospective traffickers. Finally, it is important for the government to take a firm stance against all efforts to legalize or regulate prostitution. Legalized and regulated prostitution is a magnet for human trafficking and provides a shield behind which traffickers hide.

While many challenges remain on the road ahead for President Basescu, his new government, and the people of Romania, I am convinced that, working together, they will move toward a bright and prosperous future. I stand ready to assist our friends in Romania in any way I can.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ACTION AGAINST SLAUGHTER OF SEALS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, today there will be rallies in 50 cities across the world calling on the Canadian Government to stop the cruel and needless slaughter of seals. Animal protection and environmental groups in the U.S. and throughout the world have condemned Canada's increased seal hunt, which will allow sealers to kill over 300,000 baby seals this year alone. The hunt officially opened on Nov. 15, 2004, but the bulk of the killing will begin toward the end of March, after the babies have been born. They will be clubbed and shot mainly for their fur.

A recent study was conducted by an independent team of veterinarians which found that the seal hunt failed

to comply with basic animal welfare standards and that Canadian regulations with regard to humane killing were not being enforced. The study concluded that up to 42 percent of the seals studied were likely skinned while alive and conscious. The United States has long banned imports of seal products because of widespread outrage over the magnitude and cruelty of the hunt.

Our neighbor to the north is fortunate to have vast and diverse wildlife populations—animals that deserve protection, not senseless slaughter. Americans have a long history of defending marine mammals, best evidenced through our Marine Mammal Protection Act. Not surprisingly, recent polling shows close to 80 percent of American voters oppose Canada's seal hunt, and the majority of those surveyed are willing to make consumer choices that will help put a stop to the slaughter.

On February 1, 2005, Senator COLLINS and I introduced a resolution, S. Res. 33, which urges the Government of Canada to end this senseless, inhumane slaughter. We are pleased that 18 of our colleagues in the Senate have cosponsored this resolution: Senators LUGAR, BIDEN, CANTWELL, JEFFORDS, DODD, DURBIN, FEINSTEIN, JOHNSON, LAUTENBERG, MURRAY, STABENOW, DORGAN, KENNEDY, REED, SCHUMER, WYDEN, FEINGOLD and BOXER.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

CONGRATULATING THE POPLAR BLUFF MULES

• Mr. TALENT. Mr. President, I want to recognize today the distinguished accomplishments of the Mules, the Poplar Bluff High School Boys Basketball Team of Poplar Bluff, MO, and congratulate them on winning the 2005 Missouri Class 5 State Championship for Boys Basketball.

The team had a truly remarkable season, and their accomplishment was hard fought and well deserved.

Working as a team, these talented young men pulled together to defeat the previously unbeaten No. 1 ranked team in the Nation.

The Mules finished with a record of 27 wins and only 4 losses, with 2 of those losses against teams that were, at the time, ranked in the top 10 in the Nation. The State title win was the second consecutive Missouri Class 5 Boys Basketball Championship for the Poplar Bluff Mules.

Anchored by an aggressive defense and a balanced offense, the Mules turned back many deserving opponents in their march to the championship.

I also congratulate their coach, John David Pattillo, and the excellent leadership he has provided. With a staff of dedicated assistant coaches and a great deal of support from students and par-

ents, he created a program for which all of us can be proud.

I congratulate the students and coaches of Poplar Bluff High School on their exceptional championship season.●

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE REGIONAL ACADEMIC KENTUCKY NEW ERA/ROTARY REGIONAL ACADEMIC ALL-STAR TEAM PROGRAM

• Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize nominees for the Regional Academic All-Star Team from the Pennyroyal region in western Kentucky.

The regional Academic All-Star program's purpose is to recognize top academic scholars and performers. Students from Caldwell, Christian, Trigg and Todd Counties of Kentucky were nominated based on their academic performance in seven disciplines: English, foreign language, journalism, mathematics, science, social studies and the creative and performing arts. The students are judged on their core academic score, the curriculum of the student, their grade point average, academic honors earned, unique accomplishments and achievements, extra-curricular activities, employment history, and an autobiographical essay.

Education is the foundation upon which we reach our human potential. Students in Kentucky are developing their talents, furthering their education, and pursuing their aspirations in life through programs such as the Academic All-Star program. Encouragement and recognition develop confidence and achievement among young Americans—the future leaders of our country.

The following students have been nominated for their academic excellence:

Griffin Blane, Christian Co. High School; Gregory Kyle Rader, Hopkinsville High School; Ralph King Anderson IV, Trigg Co. High School; Kody Douglas Carpenter, University Heights Academy; Dianne Lisette Rousseau, Caldwell Co. High School; Lauren Whitney Scott, Heritage Christian Academy; Jennifer Renea Fowler, Todd Co. Central High School; Samantha Joy White, Christian Co. High School; Chad Darrel Brown, Todd Co. Central High School; Casey Jo Calhoun, Trigg Co. High School; Bryan Hill, Hopkinsville High School; David Clayton Blake, Heritage Christian Academy; Stephanie Leigh Huntsman, Caldwell Co. High School; Danielle Diane Brown, Heritage Christian Academy; Matthew Wyn Lewis, Hopkinsville High School; Kristin Averitt Dickinson, Todd Co. Central High School; Brittany Nichole Goodenough, Trigg Co. High School; Haylee Laura Lynne Ortiz, Christian Co. High School; Drew Martin Swain, University Heights Academy; Sarah